

**President Jimmy Carter**  
**Question and Answer Session**  
**April 10, 2003**

**Marc Pachter [Director of the National Portrait Gallery]:**

I will start the proceedings very briefly because we have very precious minutes -- 45 minutes with the President -- and that's rare. So that's a tribute to his interest in you, the audience.

We have come to this occasion through the incredible generosity of Paul Peck, who is a benefactor of the National Portrait Gallery, and I think of the nation, whom you'll hear from later. And he's decided that civic education is the most important thing Americans can do these days.

We also join as the National Portrait Gallery with the Junior Statesmen Foundation, which has brought together some of the most amazing young people I've ever had occasion to meet in earlier programs and again today.

So let's jump to the program, which will be entirely questions from the young panelists after I ask the President to make an opening remark. I think he might be willing to just do a brief one. If not, we'll proceed after, but I first want to introduce our panelists of young people and to make sure that I get the pronunciations right.

From the far end, Nathan Meeks, who will actually ask the first question. Then Gregory Pesce. And then Lauren Beck.

So those are our panelists. This is our President. [Audience Laughter] And President Carter, would you like to make a remark before we proceed?

**President Carter:** Just welcome. I've been instructed in advance to be very brief in opening comments, so I welcome you to The Carter Center. Have you all seen the Portrait Gallery exhibit ["Portraits of the Presidents from the National Portrait Gallery" temporary exhibit at the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum] yet?

**Group:** Yes.

**President Carter:** What do you think?

**Group:** Very nice.

**President Carter:** Should it stay here permanently?  
[Audience Laughter] We're glad to have it.

**Marc Pachter:** That's the first lesson in the Presidency.  
You lobby, you pressure, you get it done.

Well, I think we're ready to proceed then with your permission. And I would like to ask Nate to begin.

**Nathan Meeks:** Wonderful. Wonderful. Good morning,  
Mr. President.

**President Carter:** Good morning.

**Nathan Meeks:** My name is Nathan Meeks. I'm from Lamar  
High School in Houston, Texas.

And my question to you is basically, throughout your Presidency, especially dealing with the issue of foreign policy, the issue of human rights has been toward the top of your agenda. I know that you dealt with countries such as the Soviet Union and South Africa, which are guilty of such human rights violations.

My question to you is basically, out of the many countries that need the U.S. assistance in this matter, how does a President -- how did you choose in your Presidency which countries to help and which countries not to help?

**President Carter:** I came out of the Deep South where we had terrible human rights violations with official racial segregation or discrimination, so when I became President, I was determined to establish human rights as a basic foundation for my relationship with every country in the world.

Every ambassador that I had in any country was my personal human rights representative. Every embassy in the world was designated as a haven for people who were persecuted by their own government.

I didn't really distinguish at the beginning that certain countries deserved more attention than others. You mentioned a couple of very important ones -- the Soviet Union then and South Africa. I would say that a lot of

my attention was devoted to South America. At the time I became President, most of the countries in Latin America were military dictatorships, so we started pursuing human rights as a basic theme throughout that region.

Now, with the exception of Haiti and Cuba, all the countries of Latin America have democracy, fairly advanced in some cases, young and proceeding slowly in others. The Carter Center still monitors their progress towards real democracy.

As far as human rights was concerned, I tried to elevate it to a top priority, so no matter who came to visit me -- and I think I met with 68 foreign leaders while I was President -- they knew that human rights would be at or near the top of our agenda. So, it wasn't singling out a certain country -- to answer your question -- it was whichever leader was coming to see me and whichever problem arose as reported to me through our embassy and the State Department.

**Marc Pachter:** Gregory.

**Gregory Pesce:** My name is Gregory Pesce. I'm from Berkeley Heights, New Jersey, and I go to Governor Livingston High School. And I have a question about your election in 1976.

When you were running for President, you campaigned as a political outsider to the system in Washington. And I was wondering whether you felt that to be a successful President, you had to be a successful politician. Or if a political outsider -- a real man of the people outside of Washington could be an effective President?

**President Carter:** First of all, I'm glad you mentioned '76 instead of '80. [Audience Laughter]

I was indeed an outsider. I was unknown, and a common joke, at first at least, was, "Jimmy who?" Nobody knew who I was.

We, of necessity, had to campaign directly with individual voters. We relied heavily on non-political supporters because all my opponents -- there were nine or ten of them -- were much better known than I was, much more famous, and they had their own support built in. We had to go out and get new supporters. The way we won the election really was careful planning in advance.

I had, in effect, seven campaigns going on every day. I went in one direction; my wife went in another direction; my oldest son, Jack and his wife; my middle son, Chip and his wife; my younger son, Jeff and his wife; my mother and her youngest sister all campaigned in different places every day.

About the time the other candidates woke up and learned my last name, we were already deeply established in Iowa, which is the first test, in New Hampshire, and in Florida -- the first three major tests. I visited 115 different towns and cities in Iowa, and there was hardly a village in which we hadn't campaigned in New Hampshire. My wife spent 120 days in Florida campaigning.

That's how we won the election. We had very little money. Our campaign staff -- who were mostly your age -- we didn't have money to pay them. If they stayed in a hotel or motel, they had to pay their own ways. They didn't have any money either, so they slept in the back seat of their automobile, or got some local family to let them spend the night in a private home, which was a very good political move.

To make a long story short, the day after my inauguration as President, we had a reception at the White House for all the families in whose houses either I or my family had spent the night. We had over 700 families come, and we gave them all a little plaque, "A Member of the Carter Family Spent the Night in This Home." [Audience Laughter]

So, that's the way we won. We did it without money, except just what we could raise locally and through small donations, and we did it by personal campaigning. I think now, all these years later, a quarter of a century later, that kind of campaign is very unlikely. Now money has become a major factor in deciding who will get the nomination of the Democratic and Republican parties and who will ultimately be elected President.

**Marc Pachter:** Lauren.

**Lauren Beck [Dunbar High School, Fort Worth, Texas]:**

When you entered office, there was a longstanding tradition of American Presidents being close to the Shah of Iran. However, his repressive regime was a little bit incongruous with your human rights policy and it must have been hard for you to support him.

Do you think it's difficult, as a President, to change such policy traditions? And if you had changed the U.S. position on the Shah, how would that have affected the future of Iran?

**President Carter:** It had been the policy of the United States in the past, before our human rights policy, to get in bed with powerful leaders, no matter who they were, if they were friendly toward the United States. This was particularly true, for instance, in El Salvador and Guatemala and Nicaragua and Argentina and Ecuador and Chile and Paraguay, as well as with the Shah of Iran.

The Shah visited me in November 1977. I was the eighth President with whom the Shah had been very supportive and familiar, beginning with Franklin Roosevelt, so we looked with favor on the Shah. His was a stable Iran and, at that time, in the context of the Islamic Middle East, appeared to be a progressive country as far as women's rights, education, and things of that kind were concerned. We didn't have any public condemnation of the Shah.

During his visit, I did privately raise with him the complaints of many Iranian citizens that their rights were not being honored. I asked whether he might alleviate the problems by closer consultation with dissident groups and an easing of strict police policies. He said that was necessary for him to maintain order and these were just communists -- about two percent, at the most -- and he had to show them who was the boss. He and I had a strong disagreement about it.

Instead of becoming more accommodating to the pressures in Iran for more rights and more access to him personally -- he was a quite isolated person -- he became more and more oppressive. This did not work. Eventually, the Ayatollah Khomeini, who had been living in exile in France, went back and the Iranian Revolution came.

This was a very great surprise, an amazing thing, not predicted in advance by knowledgeable political scientists or by other students of Iran. Certainly it was a surprise to all of our intelligence agencies to see that the Shah would be overthrown.

I don't think it would have been possible or advisable for us to publicly condemn the Shah or try to remove him from office at the beginning of my administration.

**Marc Pachter:** Nathan, do you have another question?

**Nathan Meeks:** Yes. As a follow up to my first question actually.

When, if ever, would it be appropriate to take military action against countries with drastic human rights violations?

**President Carter:** I went four years as President under some of the most trying circumstances in Latin America and Africa and Eastern Europe and Asia. We never dropped a bomb. We never fired a missile. We never fired a rifle to kill another person. We tried to predicate the greatness of our country on a peaceful relationship with even troubled areas.

One of the big problems at that time was in Rhodesia where there was racial oppression as great as it was in South Africa. It seemed to me that I spent more time on Rhodesia trying to bring it into a democratic government, which later was Zimbabwe, than I did on the Middle East peace process.

China had been alienated from us for 35 years. President Nixon had been to China in 1972 and declared that there was just one China. But he never would say which one. [Audience Laughter] So there was some doubt about whether it was the People's Republic of China or Taiwan.

I decided that in order to provide peace and stability in the Far East, that we should normalize diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, which I did the first day of January 1979.

So we had these kinds of challenges all over the world and we tried to deal with them peacefully. Egypt and Israel had been at war four times in the previous 25 years. I decided to make a major effort to bring peace between those two countries -- Israel and Israel's major challenger in the Arab world, Egypt. We were successful after tedious negotiations to bring them to a peaceful resolution.

I never felt that it was the role of the United States to attack a nation in order to remove a leader; because whether it's with bombing or missiles or guns, or whether it's severe economic sanctions, you don't usually hurt the leader. You hurt the people who are already suffering under an oppressive leader.

We were very careful about this. We did support the international sanctions on South Africa and on Rhodesia to remove Ian Smith. But it was not necessary on Egypt and Israel because they were accommodating to our efforts. I've already mentioned our human rights pressures.

The United States has great influence. For instance, in the case of Argentina and Chile -- we basically cut off all international loans, all grants from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to these two military dictatorships because they were so oppressive.

Eventually, because of the internal pressure of people who were persecuted -- including in Argentina mothers who had lost their children as "disappeared people" -- the people themselves brought about the changes. We helped them do this. I think that's a proper way to do it.

**Marc Pachter:** Gregory, your turn.

**Gregory Pesce:** Throughout your administration, President Carter, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts criticized you and many of your policies. And I think in your book you went so far to say he wouldn't settle for a healthcare reform plan unless it was his own. And then he finally challenged you in 1980 for the Democratic Presidential nomination.

I was wondering if you had made amends with Senator Kennedy since you left office [Audience Laughter] and if you had any opinions on any of his legislation or his activity since then.

**President Carter:** Let me say that after the first year I was in office, the Congressional Quarterly magazine analyzed the votes of all the Senators and the one that was most supportive of me was Senator Kennedy. That was the first year. Then he decided to run for President, and he became very antagonist and wanted to make my administration look as inadequate as possible.

We proposed a very fine comprehensive health program, which would by now have led to universal healthcare and, I think, very carefully controlled costs. But Senator Kennedy, who chaired a key subcommittee, refused to accept what we proposed. And so he blocked that effort, which I -- well, I resented it then, but I've gotten over it now. [Audience Laughter]

I think in totality -- except for what I've just described to you, mine and his problem over the nomination for President -- I think he is one of the finest and most successful Senators who serves in Washington. I think his heart is in the right place. I think the principles that he espouses in our nation's foreign policy and in our nation's domestic policy in particular, are very admirable. We have become friendly. We aren't effusive. We don't go out together, but whenever we meet each other in Washington, we're very helpful to one another.

My wife has particularly appreciated Senator Kennedy's intercession in support of her major life's work, which is mental health and removing the stigma from those who suffer from a mental illness. I would say that he and I have become adequately reconciled.

When he challenged me in November 1979, there were public opinion polls that showed that he was ahead of me three to one, although I was the incumbent President. But, by the time the primary season was over, I had beaten him two to one. That is one of the things that has helped heal my feelings toward him. [Audience Laughter]

**Marc Pachter:** The record is now straight. Lauren.

**Lauren Beck:** The Camp David Accords are often considered one of your greatest foreign policy triumphs and one of the biggest steps toward peace in the Middle East. Yet, despite the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, violence still continues on the West Bank and in Gaza. And several Arab nations still refuse to grant Israel diplomatic recognition. Can you assess for us the importance of the Camp David Accords, what you, Sadat, and Begin hoped to accomplish and how your hopes and expectations have been met.

**President Carter:** As I've described, there had been a constant series of major wars against Israel in the previous 25 years. When I took office, it looked like a hopeless case, but I set as one of my highest priorities to try to bring peace to the Middle East.

Early in 1977, which was my first year in office, I met with the major leaders in the Middle East -- not just from Israel and Egypt, but also the Syrians, the Lebanese, the Saudis, the Egyptians, the Jordanians --



and began to explore ways to bring about a resolution of the issue.

Eventually, in 1978, I brought Begin and Sadat together at Camp David and we spent 13 days there in detailed negotiations. We carved out a premise that we called the Camp David Accords, which was a framework for peace. (It's in the appendix of a book that I wrote, Blood of Abraham, so if anybody's interested, it's not very long and it's very definitive.) That was a great achievement because two very antagonist leaders came together in the spirit of great friendship.

Out of the Camp David Accords, which is just a description of what can be done, we negotiated six more months specifically on a treaty between Israel and Egypt. That was signed in the spring of 1979. Not a single word of that treaty has been violated since that time. That's 24 years of peace between Israel and Egypt. It is a vivid demonstration to everyone in the Middle East -- everyone interested in peace there -- what can be done if the United States plays a strong and balanced role, not favoring either side, so that we are trusted by both sides, and if we are very determined to bring a resolution to the issue.

**Marc Pachter:** President Carter, I'm going to take the privilege of the moderator to ask a question that is, I think, an over-arching one, and that is the whole process of decision-making in the White House, which feels like nothing that is set in stone, but is more what each President's personality requires. Could you describe a bit your understanding -- your understanding, your experience, your mandate for how decisions happened when you were in the White House?

**President Carter:** A lot of the decisions are forced on a President, against a President's will. Emergencies arise that are completely unanticipated, and you have to deal with those in what I would call crisis management. You bring in the experts on that particular subject whether it deals with a country or an issue and you seek their advice. I was always careful to get people to come and give me advice whose opinions were different from one another because I wanted to hear both sides.

I would listen to them and then I would ultimately make the final judgment: This is what our country will do in this crisis.

Another element of decision-making is deciding in advance what priorities you want to establish for your own administration to achieve. Middle East peace is one we've already discussed. That was something that I decided on very early. Bringing about an end to apartheid in South Africa and in Rhodesia was another one on which I decided even before I was inaugurated.

Another one was to normalize diplomatic relations with China. And another one was to elevate human rights as a top priority for our foreign policy. So those are the kind of priorities that I established for myself in international affairs primarily.

Also, before I became President, I had experienced as Governor of Georgia, a very severe crisis in my state and around the nation in 1973 when there was an oil embargo against the United States of America by OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries] and we had severe shortages of energy.

It was obvious that we were wasting too much of our energy. So I established that as a major domestic issue, and I worked on that for four solid years. It was my biggest domestic headache.

Eventually we were very successful in getting comprehensive laws passed, that are still on the books and still prevailing, that have at least improved the efficiency of things that we use. When you buy now a refrigerator or stove or an electric motor or an automobile, they are much more efficient than they would have been without our energy policy.

When I became President, the average mileage for an automobile was only 12 miles per gallon. That's almost double now, even though the Congress still hasn't done enough. The average efficiency for an electric motor in a manufacturing plant has increased 35 percent because of the laws we passed. Houses have to be better insulated now than they were before. So energy was one that I took on.

The final one I'll mention -- to abbreviate my answer, which I haven't done so far [Audience Laughter]-- is concerning Alaska. When President Eisenhower had been President, Alaska was made a state on the same day as Hawaii. Hawaii was looked upon as Republican. Alaska was looked on as Democratic. So those two came into our

country at the same time and made our 49th and 50th states.

There were millions and millions of acres of land in Alaska on which President Eisenhower and the Congress could not agree. This had been like a festering sore for 20 years until I became President.

I adopted the Alaska lands issue as one of my major issues to address. Before I went out of office, we had passed Alaska lands legislation which more than doubled the total size of the American Park Service and tripled the size of our wilderness areas. It was the most fundamental land management law ever passed.

So those are the kind of things that I took on that I didn't have to do, combined with those that arose without my anticipation when they happened, like the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

I would say that the most difficult issue that I have ever faced in politics was the Panama Canal treaties. From 1903 and 1904, when the United States really cheated Panama on the initial agreement, that had been a very difficult issue.

When President Johnson was in office, there was massive rioting in Panama, and President Johnson promised to have a new treaty. Every President after President Johnson agreed to do it, but it was a hot potato in the Congress. We finally negotiated a pair of treaties for Panama, and eventually two thirds of the Senate ratified the Panama Canal Treaties. That's the most difficult issue that I ever had, but I voluntarily chose to do it.

So there were some things, to repeat myself, that you don't anticipate that you have to deal with. Others you can say this is something I want to address and make it a priority.

**Marc Pachter:** Thank you.

**President Carter:** Sure.

**Nathan Meeks:** Mr. President, you grew up in a small town in Georgia where segregation was very prevalent in your society and your book, Keeping Faith, you even said that your father was a segregationist even though he practiced separate but equal policies among his workers. By the time you became state senator and later governor,

however, you had won the support of many prominent civil rights leaders in your region.

I was wondering, what role did racial relations play in your Presidency?

**President Carter:** Earlier this week, I was invited to come and speak to a joint session of the Georgia legislature. I pointed out then that had it not been for a successful civil rights movement, I would never have been seriously considered as a possible President.

When I was elected in 1976, it had been 132 years since the last Southerner had been elected President. That was James K. Polk from Tennessee. So the life of Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement not only shaped my approach to the governorship, but it made it possible for a Deep South governor to be considered seriously by people in Massachusetts and New York and all across the country as a President of the nation. I hope that answers your question.

When I became governor, I made a very brief inaugural address, just eight minutes. One of the things I said was that "at the end of a long campaign, I believe I know our people as well as anyone." I'm quoting myself. "I say to you quite frankly that the time for racial discrimination is over." And that statement, which was long overdue, resulted in my being on the front cover of Time magazine two months later in March of '71.

That projected me into the national scene. My tie to civil rights leaders like Andy Young and Daddy King, Sr., and so forth, was one of the crucial elements in my being elected.

**Marc Pachter:** Do you have a follow up, Nathan?

**Nathan Meeks:** Yes, I'd say I do.

In light of recent years and the recent, I guess you could say confrontation or the case in Washington pertaining to racial preferencing, I was wondering what your opinion was on the idea of racial preferencing, affirmative action, et cetera?

**President Carter:** I think affirmative action is absolutely necessary. It's hard for Americans to remember, or even admit, that after the War Between the States -- which some people call the Civil War [Audience

Laughter] -- when slavery was abolished and ostensibly racial equality was established in the Constitution, we went another 100 years of official racial discrimination, the so-called separate, but equal ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court. That resulted in abominable discrimination in education, in training, in job opportunities, in economic status for our minority citizens, primarily the Black citizens then.

Nowadays, the ravages of those 100 years of discrimination are still present. Quite often, in predominantly Black high schools, the graduates are still not equal in having been given opportunities, because of situations at home or otherwise, to compete equally with Whites. Obviously, there are many exceptions to that rule. Many of our young people who happen to be African-American are at the top of their class at Harvard or Yale or wherever they go.

But, in general, the discrimination ravages are still oppressive. I think that in an outstanding school like Emory -- I'm in my twenty-first year of teaching at Emory -- and at the University of Michigan where the present Supreme Court case is being debated; there should be some way to give that advantage.

The other very important aspect, related to what I've just described, is to have in any entity, a corporation or in the military or in a college environment or in a major law school, a diversity of races and backgrounds, just for strengthening the awareness or capabilities of the majority to get to know minority students. Because some of our richer White children, for instance, live in very exclusive neighborhoods, and quite often they go to private schools. They might not ever have a chance to interrelate with people who are different from them.

When I was President and I took Amy to Washington -- she was nine years old then -- we were very careful that Amy went to a public school. As a matter of fact, the majority of which, if I can say this, were minority students. I think it was a wonderful opportunity for her. Then when she came back home after I left the White House, she continued in a school that was -- I would say 75 percent African-American. I think that's very important.

For equality of opportunity and for a diverse environment, I think it's extremely necessary. One of the most powerful arguments, by the way, in the Supreme

Court discussions that are presently underway, is from the military leaders. Not only generals who have been out on the battle field, but also the commanders of Annapolis and West Point and the Air Force Academy say we have got to have the same kind of opportunities to have a diverse student body as Michigan has had in their law school.

**Nathan Meeks:** Thank you.

**Marc Pachter:** Gregory.

**Gregory Pesce:** Yes. During his two terms as President, I heard that you had very strained relations with President Clinton, who was a Southerner like you.

I was wondering if there was any reason -- if there was any truth to these claims and what the reason might be behind them if they were true. [Audience Laughter]

**President Carter:** I wish the relationship had been better. There was not ever a personal disharmony between me and President Clinton. When I ran for President, he supported me. He was running for Attorney General of Arkansas then. We knew each other and cooperated in many ways. When he ran for President, I openly supported him. But I would say that this is a question I never have answered adequately myself.

The Carter Center is my life now. My wife and I work there. We have programs in 65 nations in the world. It's our total involvement in public affairs. I was expecting, when President Clinton was elected President, for him to open the door for us in many ways to participate as a nongovernmental organization in trouble spots around the world, when we had special knowledge or ability, like the Middle East.

He chose not to do that. And part of it, I believe -- although, I don't know the facts here -- was that when President Clinton was elected, almost all of his foreign policy advisors inside the White House and in the State Department were people who had worked for me. I have to say that when I went in office, I reached back in President Johnson's administration and got the same kind of people, who had been there, who knew the ropes, and I brought them in for me.

But, there was a lot of criticism of President Clinton then from the Washington Post and other media that it was

a Jimmy Carter administration revived. I think that President Clinton and his small circle of associates in the White House said, "We need to do everything we can to separate ourselves from the Jimmy Carter image."

So I was very frustrated in many ways by not being given the same kind of opportunities for The Carter Center to use its, I think, very valuable services, as we had been given when President George Bush, Sr., was there. When I went on a foreign trip, for instance, to a troubled part of the world -- whether it was the Middle East or Peru or whatever -- President George Bush, Sr., invited me to come to the White House to give him a description of what I was doing. He would invite his National Security Advisor in, invite his Secretary of State in -- his name was James Baker -- and they would say, "What can we do to work closely with The Carter Center?" I thought it was very fine, and it was.

When President Clinton came in, that door was shut for some reason. That created some strain between us.

I have to say too that one of the most gracious acts that was ever done for me and Rosalynn was when President Clinton gave us the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He came down to The Carter Center and made a beautiful speech about what he called the wonderful work that we had done around the world.

Now his staff and mine work very closely. I think he's made some public statements that his own center in Little Rock, when he finishes building his library, will be patterned to some degree after the work that The Carter Center has done. So, there were some strains, but they were not serious. Certainly, they are not serious now.

**Marc Pachter:** Given the constraints of time, Lauren has the last question.

**Lauren Beck:** Back to the Middle East, do you think that peace can exist in the world without a resolution in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, and what do you think are the prospects for peace?

**President Carter:** The answer is no. I think, as I said in my Noble Prize speech, there is no other issue in the world that has such a wide-ranging, adverse effect as does the incapacity of Israel and the Palestinians to work out the problems between them. Because this creates a feeling throughout the Muslim world that the United

States is not fair and that the Palestinians are being treated as one of the worst human rights abuse cases in the world.

The West Bank and Gaza are occupied now by Israel. Settlements are being built. The Palestinians have practically no rights. This is a signal to the world that there's a great inequity there. It's not just a problem in Egypt and Jordan and Lebanon and other Arab countries in the Persian Gulf. It's a serious problem in Indonesia, where the Carter Center helped with an election in that enormous country.

It's a serious problem in other nations on earth where not just Muslims, but others live who look to the United States to be fair. Nigeria is about half Muslim. Many other African countries are as well.

I would say that unless we can make tangible progress or a demonstration at least of fairness and equity in the Holy Land, that that's going to be an adverse factor against the United States and against world peace. The antagonism might lead to terrorist acts. That would be troubling to us.

I don't know that the issue is insoluble. The so-called roadmap that has been spelled out, based pretty much on United Nations Resolution 242, if carried out sincerely by the Bush administration is a hopeful sign. I'm not sure that the Bush Administration is sincere about it.

We've postponed, repeatedly now, the so-called roadmap. It calls for restraints and reduction of settlements on the West Bank and Gaza, which is Palestinian territory. It calls for a Palestinian state and for the two -- Israel and the Palestinians -- to live side-by-side in peace.

That's a dream we have. And that's a dream we had in the Camp David Accords. That's a dream we spelled out in the treaty between Israel and Egypt. It's a dream that all other Presidents have pursued. If President Bush adopts that as a genuine dream and works toward it, then I see a good prospect for progress and peace.

**Marc Pachter:** Okay. That's a very powerful last statement. The only way we can thank you -- I'm not going to thank you. You know, I'm very grateful. Paul Peck is not going to thank you. The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library is not going to be the one to thank



you. It seems like a representative of the Junior Statesmen Foundation should, and that will be Nathan.

**Nathan Meeks:** President Carter, first of all, I'd like to say what an honor and a privilege it was for you to come speak to us today. You took much time out of your busy schedule just to come speak to 90 students from across the nation. And you definitely didn't have to do it, so we wanted to show you a small token of our appreciation -- a very humble token, our JSA mug. Thank you. [Audience Laughter and Applause]

**Marc Pachter:** Okay. While the President is still in the room, I'd like to ask Paul Peck to come up and give you a few of his views of why we're here today and why he made it possible for us to do this. So will you allow us to sit while you speak?

**Paul Peck:** Hi, folks. It's great to be here. And you may find this difficult to believe, but I've never followed a Nobel Prize winner before. [Audience Laughter] And I have to say to you, this chair has a nice feel to it. [Audience Laughter]

I just sat there for the last 40 minutes and I thought to myself, what a great country we have and how blessed we are.

Can you believe that President Carter, a President of the United States, the greatest country in the world, just took 40 minutes and answered with the most straight answers that you have ever heard, questions which were put to him by our young people. And our young people who are our future. This is fantastic. I can't think of any country in the world where this would happen. And I think that we are just really blessed.

And again I just want to say, thank you again to President Carter for taking his time. And thank you all for becoming involved. It is crucial -- it is truly crucial to the future of our country that we have enlightened discussion. And that means that all of you who are our leaders in the future have to get involved, have to know what's important, have to talk about this because if you do not have people discussing issues, you do not get votes that are reasonable and votes that are thoughtful and votes that make a difference.

And now, having said that, I can go into my prepared remarks. [Audience Laughter]

The first thing I want to do is I really thank, again, the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery and the Junior Statesmen. It's wonderful. I'm honored and I am pleased that they have gotten together and to have brought you this town hall. And this town hall is important because, again, it gets our young people involved and our young people are our future.

People have asked why I decided to support these types of functions. And I'll tell you. The reason is this. I believe that freedom is life. I believe that Americans are blessed. And I believe we owe it to our children and our grandchildren to pass on the same opportunities and the same love of country that we have.

If you take a look at what's happening right now, we have some problems. And these are significant problems. And these cannot keep going on.

The first thing that we look at is we have fewer people voting. We have fewer people who are participating in political discussion. We have fewer people who are getting involved in the political process. That's terrible. That's a roadmap to disaster and this can't happen. This country is important and this country is something that we love. And if it's going to be the same for our kids, we have to go out and we have to change it.

So how can we do this? America represents freedom. It represents power. It represents generosity of spirit. And the Presidency -- the Presidency is the hook that ties us all together. People are fascinated with the Presidency. That's why it's so wonderful. That's why when we think of the opportunity we had to hear President Carter, people hear about the Presidency, and as soon as they hear about him, the President has a bully pulpit. And if we tie on to that, we have the opportunity to bring about a discussion of what's important.

So that's the concept that we're trying to follow. We're bringing this about and we're bringing attention on this.

The thing, I guess, that I would like to say is that we need more organizations like the Junior Statesmen. We need more people such as yourself because the founding fathers worried that if you didn't have a population that was vigilant, that understood the issues, then democracy could fail. You can't have fewer than 50 percent of the

people voting. That makes things ripe for a demagogue. Those things have to change.

So what I want -- I guess the message that I would leave to you is this. What I want you to remember is that you are people who are change agents. You care. You're smart. You follow the issues. You are people that you won't hear a big hooray about this, but when you talk about issues, other people will listen. Every time that you talk to someone else, you will influence other people.

We want this country to continue to be great, and if it is going to be great, and if you're going to have democracy, we have to have more participation. We have to have civic understanding. We have to have a knowledge of American history, and we have to get everybody participating.

The American people are great. The American people make right decisions, but it needs informed discussion. And I want to thank you very much. And I want you to just think about your future and to say to yourself, I want to go out and change the world. I thank you very much.

**Marc Pachter:** Thank you, Paul. Now we know why you do it.

And what we'll do is have the opportunity -- we'll take a break for just a few minutes. We'll all get off the stage. And what we know was a missing piece just because of the constraints of time was your opportunity to have an interchange with the audience. Any one of you could have been up here too. We understand that and would have had very interesting questions.

So we've invited Dr. Hochman of the Carter Center, the historian, to come up here in about five, ten minutes, and he'll tell you a little bit about the Center and we'll ask -- invite you in ten minutes -- in ten minutes -- and invite you to ask questions too. And I would suggest asking questions that may have arisen in the interchange with President Carter because he knows the President very well and may give you some further background on that.

So thank you. In ten minutes, we'll start again.

**[End of tape.]**